

Sticky business of naming 'jam'

THEY'RE having a jam session in Crescent Valley, B.C., pop. 500. But the federal government says that if the 14 women who form the cooperative known as EMMA's Jambrosia call their product "jam" — or conserve, or preserve or fruit spread — they'll be breaking the law.

When you develop richly fruited, honey-sweetened jams (so good they taste like food from the gods — like ambrosia), then "jambrosia" seems a likely name.

But Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada nixed that, too: under the legal niceties of the Canada Agricultural Products Standards Act, administered by consumer and corporate affairs, "jambrosia" is unacceptable product terminology.

There is no Emma. The name is an acronym for Everywoman's Manufacturing Association, and Jambrosia . . . well, that just seemed appropriate. So they linked the two words to form the company name. But consumer affairs said their product — five different flavors of fresh fruit jams — had to be called a *melange* — a French word meaning mixture.

The cooperative that calls itself EMMA is annoyed about that, quite simply because they think theirs are the finest-tasting jams in B.C.

The word "jam" is a legal no-no because EMMA's Jambrosia puts too much fruit and too little sweetener in its product.

Federal consumer and corporate affairs food specialist Yin Lee — who made that decision — confirms that under federal la-



Nicole Parton

bellings regulations a "jam" must contain not less than 45 per cent fruit and not less than 66 per cent water-soluble solids. But EMMA's melange spread contains extra fruit and a maximum of 31 per cent water-soluble solids. Too much fruit means it isn't a "jam," she says.

"There are standards set for 'jam,' and they don't meet that standard," says Yee.

The co-op's Susan White says: "Unfortunately, most consumers are under the illusion that 'jam' — especially jam with the dubious label designation 'pure jam' — is mostly fruit. The fact is that jams and preserves, 'pure' or not, are mostly sugar."

Located in the West Kootenays halfway between Castlegar and Nelson, EMMA's was founded in 1982 with a \$2,000 investment from each of the women, and with the help of a \$166,000 federal start-up grant.

The women — the youngest is in her late 20s, the oldest in her mid-50s — have diverse backgrounds. White used to be a psychiatric social worker; co-op member Heather Gibson has an honors degree in biochemistry.



HEATHER GIBSON labelling Emma's fruit melange

Devising their own recipes and converting them to factory size with the help of the agricultural research station in Summerland, the women use only B.C. fruit and honey. Their brightly colored product label was designed by a local graphic artist.

They produce their jams year-round, today freezing 50 tons of fruit in season. Their sales have climbed from \$50,000 in 1982 to a projected total of \$350,000 this year, says White.

Last month, they signed a major distribution contract with the U.S. health food market, but still have not had full acceptance from B.C. food retailers.

IGA, Woodward's and the Park Royal Super Valu store know a good thing when they taste it, and have already placed orders for the products. Several Safeway stores in the Interior stock the jams, but other major Lower Mainland grocers have been slow off the mark.

Safeway and Overwaitea buyers haven't yet realized the product's potential — to

wit, that smartly packaged, cottage industry jams and preserves made with honey and with no artificial ingredients are among the hottest sellers (along with gourmet cookies and specialty mustards) in the U.S., with the trend fast creeping north of the border.

One of the co-op's aims has been to create employment in an area where the jobless rate is about 20 per cent, says White, but "we were told the B.C. Industry and Small Business Development ministry is not concerned about regional disparity or regional unemployment."

B.C.'s agriculture ministry also refused the co-op funding to develop newly formulated flavors of jam including huckleberry, blackberry, apricot and blueberry. The co-op is now struggling with that research and development on its own.

And so EMMA's hopes lie with consumer acceptance: "I'm just hoping the grocery business will feel this is the sort of thing people are looking for. At this point, half our business is in the States."